

Comment Summary
June 26, 2002 Public Information Meeting
Mount Vernon Circle Environmental Assessment
South County Government Center, Alexandria, Virginia

The following is a summary of comments from the public information meeting held as a part of the public involvement process for the Mount Vernon Circle Environmental Assessment. The meeting occurred on Wednesday, June 26, 2002 from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at the South County Government Center. The Government Center is located just north of the study area. The public was able to review boards with information related to the project. Personnel from the Federal Highway Administration Eastern Federal Lands Highway Division and Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc. were available to answer questions. The public could provide written comments at the meeting or send in comments via e-mail or mail until July 26, 2002.

At the meeting, 194 people signed in. Of the people who attended, 34 provided written comments at the meeting. During the 30 day comment period, an additional 140 comment forms were received, for a total of 174 comment forms received, almost 90% of those attending.

The comment form asked three questions. The questions are as follows:

- What issues (e.g. parking, safety, traffic, etc.) do you think exist within the area of George Washington's Mount Vernon Estate and Gardens?
- What alternatives or solutions would address the purpose and need of the project?
- What additional environmental resources need to be investigated as part of this project?

The following paragraphs summarize the public's responses to each of these questions, based on the comment forms received. The complete list of responses is included following the summary.

What issues (e.g. parking, safety, traffic, etc.) do you think exist within the area of George Washington's Mount Vernon Estate and Gardens?

- The issue that was mentioned the most was parking. Eighty-nine of the meeting attendees acknowledged that parking, including bus parking, is a problem. Twenty-nine stated a parking capacity problem while 39 specified that parking problems occur either seasonally or on special occasions only. Fourteen thought that parking on the traffic circle should be eliminated.
- A smaller number of respondents cited safety and traffic problems. Most of the 20 comments on this issues cited pedestrian safety issues; 4 comments specifically mentioned cyclist safety. Twenty-two comments said that traffic, especially commuter traffic, is a problem.
- Twenty-two of the attendees stated that no issues regarding the area around George Washington's Estate and Gardens exist. The following topics had one comment each:
 - Neighborhood integrity
 - Historic integrity
 - Site identity
 - Replacing forested areas with paved areas
 - Location of new parking lots relative to neighborhoods
 - Public transportation access
- Three attendees expressed a desire to have a public meeting format in which they could verbally express their opinion.

What alternatives or solutions would address the purpose and need of the project?

- One hundred and sixty-three comments were offered as solutions for the parking issues. Seventy-five comments suggested that Mount Vernon add parking capacity on the actual grounds of the Mount Vernon Estate and Gardens. Fifty-two recommended expanding the current parking lots.
- Forty-five attendees suggested relieving parking problems by using a shuttle bus to transport visitors to and from George Washington's Mount Vernon Estates and Gardens. Parking areas that were recommended as remote parking lots include the Mount Vernon High School, the local church, and Fort Hunt Park. Two attendees suggested an expansion of the public transit system.
- Thirty-nine of the meeting attendees expressed opposition to any form of bypass. The main reason is that the bypass would encourage commuters to take the George Washington Memorial Parkway (GWMP) into Washington, D.C., which would increase traffic and damage the tranquil quality of the GWMP. In addition to the attendees that opposed a bypass, there were an additional 18 that objected to roadway expansion or improvements, and 15 that stated they did not want any new roads, for a total of 72 responses opposing road realignments.
- To resolve the issue related to pedestrian safety, 19 attendees stated that a pedestrian/street grade separation should be used. Other suggestions included increased signage, improvements to the crosswalks, pedestrian crossing signals, and a crossing guard for pedestrians. Two comments were received regarding cyclist safety, including bike racks and a new bike trail.
- Some of the other ideas that each received one comment include:
 - Add a signal where VA Rte 235 north turns left before the Mount Vernon Circle.
 - Eliminate left turn from VA Rte 235 south onto the GWMP to improve traffic flow.
 - Provide better bus access to George Washington's Mount Vernon Estate and Gardens.
 - Synchronize US 1 signals.
 - Add an additional lane around the traffic circle.
 - Environmentally friendly parking outside of the gate.
 - Additional parking in general.
 - Removing bus parking from VA Rte. 235.
 - Adding an additional lot on Federal land.
 - Not allowing parking on the Mount Vernon Traffic Circle.

What additional environmental resources need to be investigated as part of this project?

- The issue about which the attendees had the most concern was the reduction in wildlife habitat that would result from constructing either a roadway or parking lots outside the grounds of George Washington's Mount Vernon Estate and Gardens. Fifty-two attendees mentioned this as an issue.
- Thirty-five attendees mentioned water quality, runoff, wetlands, and drainage/erosion as environmental issues that need consideration.
- Fifty-nine attendees stated that noise pollution, light pollution, traffic, and air quality are environmental issues.
- Forty-three comments were concerned about the quality of life within the Mount Vernon area, the character of Mount Vernon, and other socioeconomic issues. Six stated that historic and archeological preservation were important issues.

Comment Summary of Mount Vernon Public Information Meeting

June 26, 2002

What issues (e.g. parking, safety, traffic, etc.) do you think exist within the area of George Washington's Mount Vernon Estate and Gardens?

Commuters

Excessive traffic on GWMP	5
Excessive speed on GWMP	4
Excessive commuters	2
Total	11

Tour Buses

Lack of enforcement of "No Idling" signs for buses	2
Lack of bus parking	1
Excessive noise	1
Total	4

Parking

Peak time & special events only	39
Insufficient parking in general	29
Parking on circle	14
Parking on neighborhood streets	3
Parking lot access	1
Total	85

Safety

Pedestrian Safety	11
Cyclist Safety	4
In general	2
Poor signage	1
Conflict between cyclists and parking	1
No safety issues	1
Total	20

Traffic

In general	9
Potential to attract more traffic	1
Traffic flow	1
Access to public transportation	1
Curve approaching Mount Vernon from north	1
Access	1
No signalization at traffic circle	1
Total	15

Preserving Mount Vernon "as is"	1
No issues	22

Total Comments Related to Issues: 158

What alternatives or solutions would address the purpose and need of the project?

Bus Parking

On-site bus parking with shelter	3
Use remote sites	3
Parking area other than VA Rte. 235	1
Total	7

Parking

Utilize parking on/within Mount Vernon walls/grounds	75
Expand parking	52
Build underground parking	14
Build multi-level parking garage	8
Restripe existing lots	5
Charge small fee for parking	2
Use existing parking lots as overflow parking	1
Add parking lots	1
Use trams to take visitors to parking areas	1
Enforce parking measures if using circle	1
Open one lot at a time for parking	1
No solutions that use parkland	1
No solutions that destroy neighborhood integrity	1
Total	163

Off-Site

Shuttles for visitors from other areas	45
Expand public transit systems	2
Total	47

Traffic

No bypass	39
No roadway expansion/improvements	18
No new roads	15
Solutions that increase commuter traffic	6
Leave traffic pattern as is	6
Add stoplight	6
Add signage to divert traffic	3
Do not add stoplight	3
Realign VA Rte. 235 to bypass circle	2
Synchronize US 1 lights	2
Eliminate left-turn from VA Rte. 235 to GWMP	2
Reduce signage	2
Make GWMP a toll road	1
Remove traffic from around circle	1
Add additional lane on circle	1
Total	107

Pedestrian Safety

Pedestrian grade separation	19
Add "Pedestrians Have Right-of-Way" Signs	1
Add pedestrian crossing signals	3

Hire pedestrian crossing guard	3
Pedestrian signage	1
Trim back shrubbery at VA Rte. 235 intersection	1
Total	28

Cyclist Safety

Add bike racks	1
Add bike trail to US 1	1
Total	2

Increase boat traffic 3

Total Comments Related to Alternatives: 355

What additional environmental resources need to be investigated as part of this project?

Natural Environment

Wildlife habitat (forest)	52
Water quality/runoff	26
Wetlands	7
Threatened and endangered species	5
Drainage/erosion	2
Total	92

Man-Made Environment

Air quality	33
Noise	12
Traffic	11
Light pollution	2
Buses on residential streets	1
Total	59

Social Environment

Character of neighborhoods	15
Character of Mount Vernon	10
Character of GWMP	6
Viewshed	4
Economic	2
Development at Mount Vernon	2
Devaluation of property	1
Community cohesion	1
Safety of pedestrians and residents	2
Total	43

Cultural Environment

Historic Preservation	2
Archaeological Preservation	4
Total	6

No Issues 2

Total Comments Received Regarding Issues: 202